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Secretariat

30 December 2005

Secretary-General's bulletin

Ethics Office — establishment and terms of reference

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of securing the highest standards of integrity of staff members in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, taking into consideration paragraph 161 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome[1] and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/248, hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1
Establishment of the Ethics Office

1.1 The Ethics Office is established as a new office within the United Nations Secretariat reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

1.2 The objective of the Ethics Office is to assist the Secretary-General in ensuring that all staff members observe and perform their functions consistent with the highest standards of integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations through fostering a culture of ethics, transparency and accountability.

Section 2
Appointment of the head of the Ethics Office

The head of the Ethics Office shall be appointed by the Secretary-General and will be accountable to the Secretary-General in the performance of his or her functions.

Section 3
Terms of reference of the Ethics Office

3.1 The main responsibilities of the Ethics Office are as follows:

(a) Administering the Organization's financial disclosure programme;

(b) Undertaking the responsibilities assigned to it under the Organization's policy for the protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations;

[1] See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

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(c) Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethical issues (e.g., conflict of interest), including administering an ethics helpline;

(d) Developing standards, training and education on ethics issues, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management and other offices as appropriate, including ensuring annual ethics training for all staff;

(e) Such other functions as the Secretary-General considers appropriate for the Office.

3.2 The Ethics Office will not replace any existing mechanisms available to staff for the reporting of misconduct or the resolution of grievances, with the exception of certain functions assigned to the Ethics Office under section 3.1 (b) above.

3.3 The Ethics Office shall maintain confidential records of advice given by and reports made to it.

3.4 In respect of its advisory functions as set out in section 3.1 (c) above, the Ethics Office shall not be compelled by any United Nations official or body to testify about concerns brought to its attention.

3.5 The Ethics Office shall provide annual reports to the Secretary-General and, through the Secretary-General, to the General Assembly. The reports shall include an overview of the activities of the Office and any evaluations and assessments relating to such activities. The Ethics Office may also comment on rules, regulations, policies, procedures and practices that have come to its attention, and may make recommendations as appropriate.

3.6 The Ethics Office may be consulted on policy issues where its expertise, views and experience may be useful.

Section 4
Access to the Ethics Office

4.1 All staff shall be informed of the manner in which they can bring matters of concern to the attention of the Ethics Office.

4.2 No person who brings a matter to the attention of the Ethics Office or provides information to it shall be subjected to reprisals because of such action.

Section 5
Duty to cooperate with the Ethics Office

All offices and staff members shall cooperate with the Ethics Office and provide access to all records and documents requested by it. The exceptions to this are medical records that are not available without the express consent of the staff member concerned and Office of Internal Oversight Services records that are subject to confidentiality requirements. Reports of the Joint Appeals Boards shall be routinely sent to the Ethics Office unless the appellant objects.

Section 6
Duty to report misconduct

Nothing in the present bulletin shall limit the duty of staff members to report misconduct.

Section 7
Access to internal recourse mechanisms

Nothing in the present bulletin shall limit the ability of staff members to seek redress through the internal recourse mechanisms.

Section 8
Entry into force

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 January 2006.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**
Secretary-General